

mysterious voices which have spoken to you from the deeps of the creation, falsifying the expressions marked on its face. Tell of the new ideas, which, like meteors passing over the solitary wanderer, gave you the first glimpses of truth while benighted in the common belief of the Divine existence. Describe the whole train of causes which have operated to create and consolidate that state of mind, which you carry forward to the great experiment of futurity under a different kind of hazard from all other classes of men.

It would be found, however, that those circumstances, by which even a man who had been presented from his infancy with the ideas of religion, could be elated into a contempt of its great object, were far from being extraordinary. They might have been incident to any man, whose mind had been cultivated and exercised enough to feel interested about holding any system of opinions at all; whose pride had been gratified in the consciousness of having the liberty of selecting and changing opinions; and whose habitual assent to the principles of religion, had neither the firmness resulting from decisive arguments, nor the warmth of pious affection.* Such a person had only, in the first place, to come into intimate acquaintance with a man who had the art of alluding to a sacred subject in a manner which, without appearing like intentional contempt, divested it of its solemnity: and who had possessed himself of a few acute observations or plausible maxims, not explicitly hostile to revealed religion, but which, when opportunely brought into view in connexion with some points of it, tended to throw a degree of doubt on

* It will be obvious that I am describing the progress of one of the humbler order of aliens from all religion, and not that by which the great philosophic leaders have ascended the dreary eminence where they look with so much complacency up to a vacant heaven, and down to the gulf of annihilation. *Their* progress undoubtedly is much more systematic

While, however, it is in a persevering train of thought, and not by the hasty movements of a more vulgar mind, that they pursue their deviation from some of the principles of religion into a final abandonment of it all, they are very greatly mistaken if they assure themselves that the moral causes which contribute to guide and animate their progress are all of a sublime order; \$J*d if they could be fully revealed to their own view, they might perhaps be severely mortified to find what vulgar motives, while they were despising vulgar men, have ruled their intellectual career.